Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0415NC-1 for Haywood County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	2

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In Section (A)(1) Vision for Reform, the applicant offers their vision, to "Develop a Culture that Fosters Learning for a Lifetime," and indicates that this vision aligns with the four core areas of being a data-driven system, graduating college and career ready students, having great teachers and leaders, and turning around low achieving schools. This section would have been strengthened by some additional information on how the vision addresses these four areas. Perhaps school/district culture could have been addressed in the context of each of the four areas. This section serves as somewhat of a thesis for the project. By articulating what the district plans to accomplish within the four areas, the other sections can serve as evidence to support the vision. Another example of how the vision in Section(A)(1) might be strengthened is by looking at each goal section and making it more robust. The idea is put forth, "... having great teachers and leaders…" but the applicant does not go into detail as to what the desirable attributes for "great teachers" and "great leaders" ought to be. The narrative would be stronger with a more robust articulation of what their vision for each specific goal is. For example, "great teachers" could be articulated so many ways. Education's stakeholders---parents, policymakers, business owners, students, teachers, community leaders, public interest groups---all have different expectations for what "good teachers" know and can do. "Good teaching" in the context of Haywood County is important to describe for the vision of the proposal.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	4

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In section (A)(2) Approach to Implementation, the narrative details the positive aspects of the current assessment system and then offers two areas listed for improvement, "Formative assessment training" and Formative Assessment Measures" offer one aspect of good teaching, but what remains unclear is a clearly defined, systematic approach to what formative assessment needs are in Haywood County. It is important to determine how formative assessments fit into the bigger issues of reform in the district. If the goal is higher quality instruction, then it is important to describe how formative assessments offer insight into what and how well students are learning and how quickly teachers can adapt instruction to meet students' needs and further progress towards the goals listed in the vision. This section would be strengthened by starting with what the larger goals are and listing the supporting activities/strategies as a roadmap towards them. Some districts derive their formative assessments from authentic, point-in-time measure daily. Others decide on a more formal formative that is pre-packaged and aligned to the standards and curriculum. Both types of formative assessment can be effective, but what needs clarification is how the formatives will be authentic based on the individual students and their needs. It was also unclear of the total number of students from low-income families or how many students were high-need.There was no definition of what grade "13" entails in the district as funding would be utilized for "grades 9-13." Throughout the section are some vague ideas that would be strengthened with specific descriptions. For example, "We will train teachers in unique reading techniques to be used at all levels," is ambiguous. Targeting a specific literacy model for early grades that will be utilized across schools and grade bands or a particular program that has been successful in a district with similar demographics would strengthen the proposal. Perhaps there is an instructional methodology that builds on early literacy skills and has components for each grade band. Perhaps more than just describing a "unique reading program" in a generic way, the applicant could have added components of a successful reading program with research-based instructional strategies, uniform assessments and an integrated professional development plan. A district reading plan might also involve intensive intervention for below grade level readers,and school-wide, cross-curricular plans facilitated by literacy   teams while still providing advanced support and challenge for readers that move into higher levels of literacy. The same detail needs to be added to the plan to provide a summer reading program for students "falling through the cracks." It is important to plan how students might qualify for summer reading, what framework would be used, and what "incentives" might be planned for students who attend. The section has some good ideas, but the ideas need to be articulated with more robust details of precisely how the applicant plans to achieve reform.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

Section (A)(3) offers a list of goals for change but it was unclear what the actual plan for reform and change would be. For example "District staff affirm their involvement in a specific program that supports continuous improvement." It is unclear what aspects of continuous improvement will be in focus. For example, there are myriad aspects of school improvement: Attendance, discipline, parental involvement, a common lesson plan, standards-based instruction, a sheltered instruction model for English learners, etc. While it is not realistic to focus on all of these elements at once, it is important to decide what your program will be and what research supports your programmatic components.The second item on the list states, "District staff affirm involvement in continuous improvement committees." Here again, the proposal would be strengthened by specifics, e.g.., the types of committees that would be a catalyst for reform. The rest of the list in this section also proposed ideas but was unclear in specificity for reaching the goals. A description following each bullet on the list would have been helpful. This section lacked evidence of a theory of change as to how LEA-wide reform might occur. This section would be stronger with the provision of a step by step example of how an initial change framework will be transformed into a fully articulated theory of change. A lack of a theory of change impacts the development, implementation and scaling of a high-quality plan.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	2

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

In Section (A)(4), the applicant states that one of the goals for improved student outcomes is to "Increase graduation rate by 2% through intervention strategies for all students Pre-K-12. It is unclear if all students are in need of the "intervention strategies" and it would be helpful if the applicant could provide what types of intervention strategies are likely to increase graduation rates if started in Pre-K.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	2

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

In Section (B)(1), the applicant offers a bulleted list of district accomplishments. This section would have been greatly enhanced by specific detail to highlight each accomplishment. The "growth rate in state assessment results over the last four years at the elementary school" would have more impact if we new which groups of students showed growth and in what assessments. This performance highlight would have been enhanced by a description of how the growth rate may have slowed or closed an achievement gap or if the growth could be directly tied to an instructional strategy or goal. Rather than saying, "...improvements in certain areas in middle and high school scores," it would be helpful to know exactly what those areas were. Another item on the list offered for this section was, "Establishing and maintaining high expectations." This, also, is a sound practice but it is unclear how it is tied to ambitious and significant reforms for the district. The presence of high expectations is an essential elements of school success along with such related factors as strong administrative leadership, a safe and orderly environment, school wide focus on basic skill acquisition and frequent monitoring of student progress. In another example from the list, this section (B)(1), states, "Improved graduation rate." This accomplishment would be enhanced with data. Was the graduation rate improved across all schools, with all subgroups, and in all years? There is no way to know how much the rate improved or in what groups. This list could be more a more persuasive element of the section with a description of how student performance data is available to students, educators, and parents, and how the data is being used to inform instructional practices and services.

(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

In Section (B)(2), some information about the proposal personnel was highlighted. It would have been helpful to discover how the district currently handles issues of transparency. The proposal offered no details or examples as to how the LEA has demonstrated evidence of a high level of transparency in any of the required categories for this section. Details regarding how the district disseminates information regarding personnel salaries and non-personnel expenditures would have strengthened this section.

(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	4

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant listed various resources for professional development on the national, regional, and local levels, but it was unclear as to the extent of legal, statutory, and regulatory context for implementation. It is noted that the district has managed numerous grants and has a successful track record of financial administration.

(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant described how leadership teams and SIT to develop and revise the proposal. This section of the proposal was unclear in the aspect of how families and principals were engaged in the development and revision of the proposal. A survey regarding the application was distributed school-wide to all staff and offered evidence of direct engagement for the proposal but it was unclear as to the status of the LEA's collective bargaining representation. Letters of support are evidence of stakeholder support.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant offered a goal for improving graduation rates through intervention strategies K-12, and formative assessment training for staff. It was unclear what type of training or methodology for on-going and authentic formative assessments would be used. The applicant is currently utilizing a credit recovery program and plans to develop screening safeguards to identify students in danger of not graduating with their cohorts. At the elementary and middle schools, new technology is being implemented to support improved reading comprehension.

Achievement gaps of economically disadvantaged elementary students were highlighted, however, it was not clear in which content area the numbers of students were below grade level or how they compared to the other desegregated groups.

A high-quality plan for an analysis of the applicant's current status in implementing personalized learning environments and the logic behind the reform proposal contained within the applicant's proposal was difficult to determine.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	2

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant offers two paragraphs in this section and states that "School-wide plans to increase reading levels and skills...are included in the plan." Teachers will receive training on reading enhancements targeting all age levels. It is unclear what types of training or research-based strategies might be utilized to target the specific and differentiated needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. The applicant indicates that teachers will offer incentives to students for increased efforts but there is a lack of specificity of what the incentives might be or if research supports a link between incentives and achievement, and if so, at what grade levels.

The applicant plans to provide a personal laptop that, "...students can use to work at their pace whenever a subject is not well understood." While the one-to-one technology would qualify as an individual learning tool, what remains unclear is how student-centered learning and academic achievement will increase by providing the technology and software alone. Section (C)(1) Might be strengthened by explaining how teachers who feel ill-prepared to address the diverse needs of their students, for example, have ready access to more options than ever before as a result of the wide range of software and hardware tools available. Technology can equip teachers to address students' needs in an almost limitless number of ways, through content input, learning activities, and opportunities to demonstrate comprehension. And because many students come to the learning environment with a predisposition for using it seamlessly, technology can become an intermediary that bridges the relationship between teacher and student, allowing the teacher to meet a student in a familiar realm.

In this section (C)(1), the applicant describes that each high school student will be given a personal laptop. The section would have been strengthened by information on how the applicant plans to maximize the opportunity of the added technology to target ongoing feedback. If teachers are to use student data to improve instruction, as the proposal requires, teachers need to be able to locate data, understand what the data means, and select an instructional approach that addresses the student learning situation. It would be helpful to know how the applicant will use data to determine accommodations and high-quality

strategies for high-need students to ensure college-and career-ready graduation requirements. The section lacked a thick description of the "varied teaching techniques personalized for individual student learning," as stated in this section.

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	2

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not address the separate sections of the application. Instead, the applicant provided a bulleted list of steps for providing 18 hours of professional development. The applicant will plan training to incorporate best practices, pacing/course guides, and Common Core/Essential Standards training as well as K-2 reading and formative assessments, but it was unclear how the training, policies, tools, data, and resources would address the required, high-quality plan outlined in the application, for example, there was no information from the district's teacher evaluation system. It also would have been helpful to get information on the applicant's high quality plan for increasing the number of students who receive instruction from effective teachers, perhaps focusing on STEM.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	5

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant offers a detailed list of the chain-of-command and their assigned duties at the central office. A section on school board policies and philosophy highlights how LEA decisions are made. The narrative included the applicant's inability to comply with (C)Giving students the opportunity to progress and earn credit based on demonstrated mastery, not the amount of time spent on a topic; due to North Carolina education department statute. The applicant provided information as to how students are provided the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of standards in multiple times and in multiple ways through high school credit recovery opportunities and formative, benchmark, and summative assessments. It was unclear what opportunities are available to the elementary and middle school students.

Sample accommodations, instructional practices and resources were highlighted to illustrate the LEA's dedication to making learning accessible to all students.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant highlights the LEA's efforts to promote educational excellence through Internet access. This is one of the strongest sections of the proposal as it directly addresses each subpoint the application is requesting, however, the LEA does not have the type of format that allows for students and parents to export their information in an open data format, they plan to implement a new data system that will provide for this proposal requirement by the 2013-14 school year. The applicant articulates their interoperable data systems currently in place.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	1

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided performance measures data but it was unclear how it aligned to the continuous improvement process. for example, there are only two benchmarks for Pre-K-3 and they are: (a) Color, shape and letter recognition and (b) standing in line, carrying lunch tray, taking turns. What remains unclear is their approach to continuously improve their plan and their strategy for implementing a more rigorous continuous improvement process and specific examples for doing so.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant did not appear to address (E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant gave examples of some academic performance measures with supporting data. It was unclear how the data provided would address the rationale for selecting that measure. The applicant would strengthen this section of the proposal by articulating how the measures will provide rigorous, timely, and formative information tailored to the proposed plan. Also helpful would be a description of the ways the applicant will measure health or social emotional indicators. A key challenge for 21st-century schools involves serving students with varied abilities and motivations for learning. Unfortunately, many students lack social-emotional competencies and become less connected to school as they progress from elementary to middle to high school, and this lack of connection negatively affects their academic performance, behavior, and health in general.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	3

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant offers various strategies for evaluating efficacy of implementation and ensure continuity of services. Various performance measures have been put in place to to evaluate training and instructional efforts. The LEA has a chart for it's goals, strategies, indicators, and methods but it is unclear how they will address necessary modifications to their plan should the need arise. A clear plan for measuring efficacy of implementation and success would be helpful. Even clearly stated curricular goals will lose their potential to drive the efforts of a school if no effort is made to provide all stakeholders accurate information about student achievement that is reflective of those goals. In most organizations, what gets monitored gets done, and this proposal would be strengthened by articulating how various aspects of plan can be modified and/or will be improved upon through out the life of the project.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant stated that sustainability will be "substantial" due to trained teachers' use of techniques to improve reading skills that will transfer to other subject areas, technology being passed down from high school to lower grades, and the impact of a Pre-K-12 program. There was little evidence to support how the applicant would sustain expenses such as: coordinated services and programs for families through the Community Contact Services agencies, the instructors for the Summer Reading program, transportation for the Summer Reading program, stipends for the tutors, and student incentives. The budget lacked specific and supporting details.

The budget narrative was scored low because it was ambiguous as to what other funds the applicant will use to support the implementation of the proposal (e.g., external foundation support; LEA, State, and other Federal funds. $400,000 is itemized as training for "various subject matter and teaching techniques" for 15 teachers but the grade level, content area, school site, selection criteria, etc. was lacking a thoughtful rationale for this investment. $900,000 is itemized as student incentives for increased efforts for attendance and academics but lacked specific details or rationale. Also unclear was the rationale for the stipends for Teachers College. It would have been helpful to know if the funds are being used for any type of coursework or if the teachers could select any course they want. Also, salary increases may be necessary if the increased hours move the 15 participating teachers on the salary schedule. Equally important to articulate is how would the 15 teachers would be selected. While ideas were given as to the lasting effect of the project (which lacked specificity), sustainability in context of funding was not clearly addressed.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	1

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application was scored low in this section because of insufficient evidence of a high-quality plan for sustainability of the project's goals after the term of the grant. Also unclear were any plans for support from State and local government leaders and potential support for sustainability. Experience shows that the most successful school reform projects also include some type of broad partnerships between communities and schools. Community partners bring an array of resources that contribute to both the quality and the sustainability of of school programs. Working with a diverse group of community partners can increase the potential for sustainability because each partner organization comes with its own constituency and contacts that provide a range of support that can benefit the school district.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	2

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant presents a case for developing a relationship with a Student Support and Community Program but the description is ambiguous as to what the student support entity is or any description of an existing relationship with a named organization or a particular community program. The applicant presents desired outcomes, but it was unclear exactly how this would be achieved. For example, the first performance measure is "Student/family basic needs are met." It would be helpful to offer details on what organizations would be best to address this issue, what needs and assets would be included, and how they would be funded. The applicant includes the use of a database for tracking progress on the performance measures but it is unclear if additional equipment would be necessary or what the challenges of a shared database might be. The statistics included in the Performance Measures chart were unclear. It would be helpful to provide an explanation of what 75% means, for example, does the applicant could intend that 75% of the students' families in one school will have basic needs met. The lower numbers of the chart do not have percentages. These numbers are inconsistent with the top numbers and it is unclear if these numbers represent students, families, or the same percentages as in the top three rows of the chart. There was little evidence to support how the applicant plans to improve results for participating students facing significant challenges, such as students with disabilities, English learners, family instability, or other child welfare issues.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's proposal indicates some fundamental ideas about how to improve conditions for increasing reading achievement and supporting students in a way that will achieve college and career readiness. The proposal lacks evidence of how it will comprehensively build on the core educational assurance areas in detailed and specific ways. It is in the lack of specificity that makes portions of the proposal weak, and with budgets tighter and accountability demands greater, detailed evidence for the effectiveness of costly programs and materials is more important than ever before. The application has strengths to build on, however,based on the information provided, the application is not yet in-depth enough to meet all aspects of the goals and expected outcomes of Absolute Priority 1.

Total	210	45

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0415NC-2 for Haywood County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	1

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The vision statement is very brief and cannot be judged as comprehensive and coherent:
• The first strategy is stated as achieving success through "cooperative involvement in stakeholder groups," but how this involvement will lead to success is not explained.
• The second strategy is to "create an environment that focus on preparation for tomorrow," but again no explanation or detail is provided.
• It is not clear whether these two strategies represent the outcome goals for the proposal. If they are the goals, they are not easily measureable nor clearly linked to student performance.
• Although the proposal states that the vision is aligned with the four core assurances of RTTT, how this alignment actually happens or will happen is not described.

	Available	Score
(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	3

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The approach to implementation is lacking important details:

• Since the project will involve all district schools, no selection process was needed. However, it is not possible to determine if the participating schools meet eligibility requirements since the proposal includes only data aggregated at the district level.
• Although all schools are participating, data provided shows only 86% of students participating. Little, if any, explanation is given for which students will and won't participate.
• The proposal does indicate that all low-income high-need students will participate, but these students only comprise 61% of total students, according to the data table provided. The rest of the students making up the 86% participating are not identified.

	Available	Score
(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	2

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not include the required elements of a high-quality plan: goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.

• A bulleted list of activities is provided, but does not provide a coherent plan for LEA-wide reform and change
• The proposal does not offer an overall description of how the listed activities will help the district reach its outcome goals, which, as noted in (A)(1), are not clearly stated in the vision.

	Available	Score
(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

While the targets generally project student performance gains, the data tables provide conflicting and confusing information relating to the goals:
• Overall baseline reading baseline performance is listed as 92.8%, yet no subgroups are performing above 77.2%.
• Although starting at the same baseline, Hispanic students are projected to attain higher gains than low-income students. No rationale is provided for the discrepancy.
• Targets for some student subgroups being taught by effective educators are very low (<50%), so cannot be considered

ambitious.
• High school graduation rates are projected to drop 8% (from 90% to 82% after the grant period, which is lower than the starting baseline.
• College enrollment rate appears to be narrowly interpreted as students earning college credit while still in high school, and not inclusive of students enrolling in college after graduation, as defined in the notice. Also, data were provided as raw student numbers, not rates. Without information on individual high school enrollments (see (A)(2) comment), it is not possible to determine what percentage of students are represented by these numbers.
• No appropriate methodologies are described for how achievement gaps or post-secondary degree attainment were determined. The methodology provided for achievement gaps refers to formative assessment and thus does not conform to the requirements in the notice.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	**15**	**3**

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The information provided does not constitute a clear record of success:
• The only performance data provided are for high school English I, Algebra I, and Biology. While these do demonstrate gains, no data on students who take junior or senior-level courses nor students in elementary and middle school are provided.
• No actual data are provided to support the claims of decreased dropout rate.
• The rest of the information provided is a list of improvement activities, but they are not linked to tangible results
• No information is provided regarding closing of achievement gaps.
• No information is provided regarding significant reforms in persistently lowest-achieving schools.
• No specific information is provided regarding the availability of student performance data; only a general statement about using local media.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	**5**	**0**

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The information provided for this criterion is non-responsive to the requirements:
• The response only addresses personnel costs to be included in the grant budget; it does not address the request for information regarding the current use of school-level financial information in the district.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	**10**	**1**

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal is mostly non-responsive to this criterion. Very little information is provided regarding state legal, statutory, and/or regulatory requirements that may or may not provide sufficient autonomy to the district to implement personalized learning environments. The descriptions provided of national, regional and district inprovement efforts is not relevant to this criterion. Mention is made in another section of the proposal of a state law that allows site-based decision making, which may be supportive of personalized learning, but is not specifically described as being so. The proposal also states that NC state law does not allow for credits based on demonstrations of mastery, a key component to implementing personalized learning environments.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	**10**	**1**

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal provides insufficient evidence of stakeholder support:
• No information is provided as to whether the district has collective bargaining representation and no evidence is provided for either (B)(4)(a) (i) or (ii). Although a staff survey was administered, only the open-ended responses were described as being used to modify the proposal. The subject matter for the rest of the survey is not described.
• Letters of support were provided from both the state and the mayor, but describe only general support for the proposal, not

specific mechanisms for supporting the grant project if awarded.
• No letters of support were included from any organizations representing teachers (only two letters from individual teachers), parents, community organizations, business organizations, or institutions of higher education.

	Available	Score
(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	0

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal does not include the required elements of a high-quality plan: goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties. It also does not specifically address current status of implementing personalized learning environments. Data on achievement gaps are provided, but with no explanation for their cause.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	4

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal is largely non-responsive to the detailed requirements of this criterion:
• It provides an insufficient description of an approach to reading improvement which does not include the required elements of a high-quality plan: goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, and responsible parties.
• Only two very vague and general strategies are described: teacher training and high school student laptops.
• No detail is provided as to who will do the training, what the training content will be, how the teacher training will translate into effective individualized learning, or how students will be trained tio be proficient at accessing reading instruction and content via the laptop computers.
• No elementary or middle school details are provided.

	Available	Score
(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	3

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal is essentially non-responsive to the detailed requirements of this criterion:

- It lacks the required elements of a high-quality plan (i.e. goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties).
- It describes one three-day training on Common Core Standards, with no mention of reading (which is presumably the project focus) or training teachers to implement personalized learning environments, or differentiated instruction.
- Actual tools, data and resources to be utilized are not described.
- No specific high-quality plan is included for increasing the numbers of students who receive instruction of effective and highly effective teachers and principles, including in hard-to-staff schools, subjects, and speciality areas.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	9

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal adequately addresses some, but not all, of the requirements of this criterion:

- The description of the current structure for central office personnel does not indicate how the office will specifically support the participating schools to implement RTTD activities.
- The proposal provides evidence through legislative references that the state requires site-based decision-making for all schools, including school improvement plans and teams, which can potentially support grant activities in each school.
- The proposal indicates that mastery learning is not currently allowed in the state except for Early College High school, but the district is working to receive a waiver from the State Board, which would support personalized learning, including

- demonstrations of mastery, in the district.
- The proposal provides evidence that multiple formative and summative assessments are in use and can be utilized to support grant activities.
- A media/technology committee is responsible for acquiring some of the district's learning resources, but this process is not specifically linked to the grant activities.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	2

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The response lacks the required elements of a high-quality plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables and responsibile parties).

The response concentrates mainly on technology/internet access and does not address other learning resources.

An open data format and interoperable data systems are not currently available, and the state longitudinal data system is not yet fully functional, providing limited capacity to fully implement personalized learning environments.

Peer and local supports are not addressed.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	0

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal narrative includes a description of past improvement efforts, but does not include a description of a strategy for a rigorous continuous improvement process specifically geared to its RTTD initiative going forward (during and after the term of the grant), as required by this criterion.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	1

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal includes a list of communication methods currently being used, but not communication strategies connected specifically to the goals of the proposal.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	2

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

While 11 required performance measures are listed, they raise concerns regarding appropriateness for the proposal:

- A rationale for including mathematics scores as a measure for a project focused on reading is not provided.
- No rationale is provided for some of the measures (e.g., measures for "All", PreK-3 measures, physical wellness measures).
- There is insufficient explanation for how the measures will provide rigorous, timely and formative information specifically tailored to the proposal.
- There is no description of how measures will be reviewed and improved over time.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	0

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal is non-responsive to this criterion:

- Only some student measures are discussed in any detail, with no explicit or implied application to evaluating the overall effectiveness of the RTTD investment.
- A Goals-Strategies-Indicators table is provided but does not demonstrate coherence in implementing the reading-

focused project; it includes many other components (e.g. extracurricular activities, adult high schools) and does not align well with the performance measures.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	2

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

Without any high-quality plans included in this proposal, it is not possible to determine whether annual costs are appropriate for specific project activities, or whether they are reasonable and sufficient to implement the proposal.

One-time investments are not clearly identified in the budget-narrative.

The total budget amount falls into the allowable range for the number of students served.

Only RTT-D funds are described, so presumably no other funds will be directed toward the proposed project (other fund line is 0).

	Available	Score
(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	0

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal lacks the components of a high quality-plan (goals, activities, timelines, deliverables, responsible parties) and does not include any budget information for years following the grant period. Thus the sustainability of project goals cannot be determined.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	1

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The district has not yet created a coherent and sustainable partnership with another entity; the actual partner is not identified.

The proposal identifies five desired results that would serve to support the broad Absolute Priority 1. However, performance measures seem achievable but not particularly ambitious: the application projects only an 8% increase over five years (from 75% up to 83%) in meeting families' basic needs, students having access to learning opportunities outside the classroom, and students having opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities. The application also only projects a 4% increase over five years (from 80% up to 84%) in studnets graduating high school college and career ready.

The proposal is non-responsive to part (3) of this criterion.

How needs will be determined and how services would be tailored are only vaguely described.

No description of how to scale the model beyond participating students is provided.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Not Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The proposal lacks a clear vision with specific goals related to establishing personalized learning environments. Since no high-

quality plans were included, it is not possible to conclude that the applicant understands how to implement these environments for all students. The proposal contains conflicting information, is non-responsive to some criteria, and lacks a coherent, logical approach to improving reading performance using personalized learning environments.

Total	210	38

Race to the Top - District

Technical Review Form

Application #0415NC-3 for Haywood County School System

A. Vision (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(A)(1) Articulating a comprehensive and coherent reform vision (10 points)	10	3

(A)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant indicates that its current vision statement "Develop a Culture that fosters Learning for a Lifetime" aligns to the four educational assurance areas specified by ARRA. However, the information provided is ambiguous with regard to the extent of the match to some portions of the four areas:

- the extent to which they recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most,
- the extent to which measures of student growth are part of the data driven decision making, and
- how standards and assessments are a part of the goal to graduate students that are college and career ready.

The applicant states that it uses "a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly-defined performance measures." This statement is followed by a list of measures and several training efforts but the proposal lacks specific details as to how the project will accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase equity through personalized student support.

(A)(2) Applicant's approach to implementation (10 points)	10	5

(A)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application indicates that reading will be the focus of the project at all grade levels PK-12 and includes a list of elementary, middle and high schools to be included in the project. However, no documentation was provided to indicate how the schools were selected.

The number of participating students that the LEA will serve in the project exceeds the percentage required for eligibility. Nearly 50% of the participating students are also classified as high needs.

(A)(3) LEA-wide reform & change (10 points)	10	4

(A)(3) Reviewer Comments:

All schools in the district will be served in the proposed project so scale-up is not required to reach all district students. The proposal provides a list of activities that will be implemented to promote LEA-wide reform and change. However, the proposal provides no rationale that these activities are sufficient to accelerate student achievement, deepen student learning, and increase equity through personalized student support grounded in common and individual tasks that are based on student academic interests.

(A)(4) LEA-wide goals for improved student outcomes (10 points)	10	3

(A)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The status goal provided in the application indicates that the students in the LEA are currently achieving at high levels. The proposal sets goals that are ambitious given this already high performance. The goals appear to be achievable. No status information or goals are provided for subgroups.

It is unclear how the achievement gap measure is calculated and the meaning of the goals that have been established for reducing the gaps. No information is provided to indicate how the district data and goals compare to State ESEA targets.

The graduation rate goal appears to be ambitious and achievable although the goal for the post-grant period raises a concern about the sustainability of project. Additionally, no graduation rate goals were set for various subgroups.

B. Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform (45 total points)

	Available	Score
(B)(1) Demonstrating a clear track record of success (15 points)	15	5

(B)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application indicates some track record of success in the following:

• Experienced growth in state assessment results over the past four years at the elementary school;

• Experienced improvements in certain areas in middle and high school assessment scores;

• Improved graduation rate; and

• Decreased drop-out rate.

None of the information provided addressed progress in closing achievement gaps, gaps in graduation rates, or gaps in college enrollment. Additionally, the proposal did not address any past success in achieving ambitious and significant reforms in its persistently lowest-achieving schools or in its low-performing schools.

The application lacked evidence of systems that make student performance data available to students, educators and parents in ways that inform and improve participation, instruction, and services.

	Available	Score
(B)(2) Increasing transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments (5 points)	5	0

(B)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal did not supply evidence to demonstrate that the LEA has implemented a high level of transparency in LEA processes, practices, and investments. Specifically, the applicant did not demonstrate that it makes available the four categories of school-level expenditures from State and local funds.

	Available	Score
(B)(3) State context for implementation (10 points)	10	2

(B)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The LEA provided information that indicates that it has established a local culture that is open to and embraces improving teaching to increase student learning. However, there was insufficient information to demonstrate that the LEA is granted sufficient autonomy under State legal, statutory, and regulatory requirements to implement the personalized learning environments required in this competition.

	Available	Score
(B)(4) Stakeholder engagement and support (10 points)	10	4

(B)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application provided limited evidence that school staff were involved in the development of the proposal and that they were provided with an opportunity to provide feedback that was used to shape the proposal. There was no evidence of any formal mechanism to allow teachers to vote on whether they support the proposal. Nor did the application include any letters of support from any teacher or administrator organizations.

The application did not address how students, parents, and community were involved in the development of the proposal. Additionally the

few letters of support that were provided were nearly all from educators or school board members.

(B)(5) Analysis of needs and gaps (5 points)	5	2

(B)(5) Reviewer Comments:

The application identified needs that the project will address by providing information about the number of students by school that score below grade level. The application also provided a list of activities that will be implemented to address the needs. However, the application did not address the remaining four elements of a high quality plan:

- the key goals;
- the timeline for implementation of the activities;
- the deliverables that will result from the activities; and
- the parties responsible for implementing the activities.

C. Preparing Students for College and Careers (40 total points)

	Available	Score
(C)(1) Learning (20 points)	20	3

(C)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application provided vague descriptions of activities to provide students with personalized learning environments. For example, "This training [for teachers] will enable them to take students at their level of skill and provide individualized plans and strategies to encourage them to read and improve their skills," and " All high school students will be given a personal laptop that will allow them to experience one-to-one technology and enhance learning at all levels."

Beyond that global information there was inadequate attention to the elements of a high quality plan:

- The key goals;
- The specific activities to be undertaken and rationale for the activities;
- The timeline;
- The deliverables to result from the activities; and
- The parties responsible for implementing the activities

(C)(2) Teaching and Leading (20 points)	20	4

(C)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The proposal indicates that the applicant will "train all licensed staff in the Common Core/Essential Standards." The application is unclear as to how this training will personalize the learning environment in order to provide all students the support to graduate college- and career-ready.

Beyond a listing of general activities that will be implemented to deliver and monitor the results of the professional development, the application does not address the required elements of a high quality plan:

- The key goals;
- The timeline;
- The deliverables to result from the activities; and
- The parties responsible for implementing the activities.

D. LEA Policy and Infrastructure (25 total points)

	Available	Score
(D)(1) LEA practices, policies, rules (15 points)	15	13

(D)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The application describes an appropriate system of policies, practices and rules that will facilitate personalized learning through:

- A central office organization that appears to have adequate staff in appropriate roles to provide schools with the support and service needed for this project;
- A district policy on site based decisions that provides for a school improvement team composed of the principal, representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, teacher assistants, and parents of children enrolled in the school;
- Policy provisions that specify that the parent representatives on the school improvement team must reflect the racial and socio-economic composition of the students enrolled in the school;
- Policy stipulations that give the school improvement team flexibility with regard to decisions in the areas of budget, scheduling, and personnel; and
- A number of credit recovery programs to assist students that complete a course but do not pass the end-of-course test.

The proposal indicates that currently mastery learning is not allowed in the state except in limited circumstances. The proposal also indicates that the LEA is currently consulting with the state Department of Instruction to develop a earned credit plan that is based on demonstrated mastery in alternative settings.

(D)(2) LEA and school infrastructure (10 points)	10	4

(D)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application indicates that the LEA has been a leader in technology adoption and plans to "augment teaching styles using these tools [technology] to more effectively take advantage of the different learning styles presented by students in our classrooms." However, the proposal lacks specific information such as:

- Details of individual educator access to the technology; e.g., does each educator have a dedicated computer at work or a laptop to be used both at work and at home?
- Beyond the laptops to be provided to high school students, what computers are available to students at other levels?
- How will the applicant ensure that parents have equitable access regardless of income?
- Does the ticket system of tech support include student home computers, parent computers?

The proposal indicates that the LEA does not currently use information technology systems that allow parents and students to export their information in an open data format and to use the data in other electronic learning systems.

The proposal also indicates that systems for Human Resources, Budget, Student Information, Payroll, and Instructional Improvement are linked to systems at the state Department of Public Instruction. However, the information is ambiguous as to whether these systems use interoperable data systems.

E. Continuous Improvement (30 total points)

	Available	Score
(E)(1) Continuous improvement process (15 points)	15	0

(E)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant's response to this criterion is inadequate. It provides several brief descriptions of performance measures but it does not provide a strategy that indicates how the applicant will monitor and measure these performance measures or how it will publicly share information on the quality of its investments funded by Race to the Top – District.

(E)(2) Ongoing communication and engagement (5 points)	5	0

(E)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant provided no evidence of strategies for ongoing communication and engagement with internal and external stakeholders.

(E)(3) Performance measures (5 points)	5	1

(E)(3) Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has indicated a limited number of ambitious performance measures that appear to be achievable.

The application proposed an insufficient number of performance indicators. The applicant also did not indicate:

- How each measure will provide rigorous, timely, and formative leading information tailored to its proposed plan and theory of action regarding the applicant's implementation success or areas of concern; and
- How it will review and improve the measure over time if it is insufficient to gauge implementation progress.

(E)(4) Evaluating effectiveness of investments (5 points)	5	2

(E)(4) Reviewer Comments:

The application contained a thorough set of goals, indicators and methods that would form the basis of plans to evaluate the project's effectiveness. However, there were no details such as:

- what staff or external evaluator would be engaged to carry out the evaluation;
- the schedule for collection of the evaluation data and whether any or the data would be available for formative evaluation to help guide program adjustments; and
- how the data would be reported and to whom.

F. Budget and Sustainability (20 total points)

	Available	Score
(F)(1) Budget for the project (10 points)	10	7

(F)(1) Reviewer Comments:

The proposed budget appears to be reasonable and adequate to support the project activities. It does, however, not seem to be realistic to expect level costs across the four project years.

The budget does not identify any funds other than the Federal funds that will be used to support the project. It is unclear whether it is true that no other funds will be used for support.

No funds have been identified as being used for one time expenditures.

(F)(2) Sustainability of project goals (10 points)	10	3

(F)(2) Reviewer Comments:

The application provides a reasonable rationale for sustainability However, none of the elements of a high quality plan are provided.

Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)

	Available	Score
Competitive Preference Priority (10 total points)	10	4

Competitive Preference Priority Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has indicated a partnership arrangement with "Student Support and Community Contact Program." However, no letter of support or partnership agreement was included in the application.

The educational outcomes that were proposed as population-level desired results were not comprehensive. Additionally, the application provides insufficient information about how the partnership would address the required elements of this section.

Absolute Priority 1

	Available	Score
Absolute Priority 1	Met/Not Met	Met

Absolute Priority 1 Reviewer Comments:

The applicant has described goals and activities that are expected to create learning environments that will:

- improve learning and teaching through the personalization of strategies, tools, and supports for students and educators that are aligned with college- and career-ready standards;
- accelerate student achievement and deepen student learning by meeting the academic needs of each student; and
- increase the effectiveness of educators.

Among the activities and goals to accomplish this priority are:

- Improve the graduation rate by 2% each year;
- Improve system composite score by 3% through the use of differentiated instruction;
- Improve system-wide attendance by 1% by improving school environment;
- Use a comprehensive assessment system based on clearly-defined performance measures;
- Identify and use new methods of credit acquisition and recovery; and
- Train all licensed staff in the Common Core Standards.

Total	210	69